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“AMEN.”

NOTES ON ITS SIGNIFICANCE AND USE IN
BIBLICAL AND POST-BIBLICAL TIMES.

“AMEN” is perhaps the commonest word of human speech. Three great religions have brought it into daily use wherever they have gone¹. Like other things in daily use, indeed, it is probably seldom thought of, and some may be surprised to learn that much has been written about it; many a rule concerning its use, many a maxim regarding its value. Much, it is true, of what has been said may be paltry enough according to the estimate of to-day. But as long as the word “Amen” continues to occupy the place it does in synagogue and church and mosque, it must merit attention. It is, in fact, one of those beautiful relics of the past, the legitimate hold of which upon the imagination and the heart an age such as ours does well to cherish, while some of the facts gathered

¹ This is illustrated by the story, the source of which I do not know, of a meeting between two converts to Christianity—perhaps an Indian and a Pacific Islander—one of whom was reading in his own tongue the Christian Scriptures. Communication between them was impossible, till one of them thought of summing up his mental attitude to the contents of the book in the doxology “Hallelujah,” whereupon the other at once heartily replied “Amen.” The Hebrew expressions had, of course, been naturalized in both languages.

in this article have a certain additional interest from their bearing on other wider and more important subjects¹.

1. *The word "Amen."*—The fundamental idea of the root אמן, in the north and south Semitic languages alike², is "stability, steadfastness, reliability." "Amen" represents in form an old Semitic *amin*, which, according to analogy, should be an intransitive adjective³. It has retained this power, however, only in the somewhat rare Arabic *Amin*^{un}, "safe, secure," while in Hebrew "Amen" has become an indeclinable particle. As contrasted with other particles from the same root, it seems to involve the will as well as, perhaps we should say rather than, the judgment⁴. This is best seen on an examination of the instances of its occurrence in the Old Testament.

2. *Usage of "Amen" in the Old Testament.* (1) *Modes of Use.*—The first thing that strikes one about the use of "Amen" in the Old Testament is that it is practically

¹ Some (especially statistical) details have been retained merely for the sake of giving them a permanent record somewhere, for reference if they should ever be wanted.

² Cf. e.g. Assyrian *temenū*, "foundation," and Syriac, "daily bread," in the Paternoster (Curetonian and Sinaitic Palimpsest MSS.) on the one hand; and Aethiopic *amēna*, "trust," and also "confess" (hardly "verum esse," as Dillmann says, quoting Luke i. 1), on the other.

³ Barth, indeed, regards it (*Die Nominalbildung*, &c., 5 c and 7 b) as an abstract noun. Nor is it an answer to say that the feminine form *amint* or *amant* (אִמַּנְת) is abstract; for in Hebrew, at least in the first letters of the Dictionary, when words exist in both forms, it is rather the rule than the exception that they should agree in this respect. Moreover, on the other hand, the majority of nouns of the form *amin* are concrete, and there is, as a matter of fact, a difference between *amin* and *amint* (see next note).

⁴ For אָמֵן, see especially Isa. xliii. 9, where E. V. is right, as against the LXX and Peshitta, in rendering אָמֵן as *oratio recta*, "Truth!" Cf. also the quasi-adverbial use of אָמֵן at the end of a sentence in Ps. cxxxii. 11 and Jer. x. 10 (see also 1 Kings xvii. 24, Pesh.). The three particles referred to above are connected with the parallel stem *amuna*. אֲמִנָּה (JE) introduces a solemn confession (Gen. xx. 12, Josh. vii. 20); אֲמִנָּה (8 times, 6 in Job) seems to be used by preference to introduce hypothetical or ironical sentences; while אֲמִנָּה (5 times) always introduces a question (Ps. lviii. 2, reading אֲמִנָּה with most, is sarcastic).

confined to the literature that modern criticism regards as Exilic or Post-Exilic. What makes this still more noteworthy is that the three cases of which this cannot be said form a class by themselves—they are cases of what we may call the *Initial Amen*. Benaiah, after receiving instructions about the coronation of Solomon, replies: “Amen! Yahwè the God of my lord the king say so too!” (1 Kings i. 36). So Jeremiah says to Hananiah: “Amen! Yahwè do so!” &c. (Jer. xxviii. 6). In the third passage it is God that is addressed; Jeremiah replies to the “word” that came to him from Yahwè in the phrase: “Amen; Yahwè!” In these cases “Amen” is a kind of conversational particle, and stands by itself, prefixed to an exclamatory sentence, expressing a wish, “So be it!”

In the later literature the “Amen” tends to become more and more liturgical. The Deuteronomist makes “all the people” say “Amen” to each of the twelve¹ curses (Deut. xxvii. 15–26); Nehemiah tells us that the “congregation” pledged itself in the matter of the poor brethren by a solemn “Amen” (Neh. v. 13); when Tobias and Sarah were left alone he prayed, and at the end of his prayer “she said with him, Amen” (Tobit viii. 8)²; and, according to the Vulgate, when Gabael prayed and blessed Tobias, all who were present said, “Amen” (Tobit ix. 12). In this group the sentence introduced by the “Amen” is left to be understood from the situation. We might call this the *Detached Amen*.

This liturgical “Amen” tended to become double. “Amen, Amen” is the formula assigned by the Priestly writer to the suspected wife in the oath of purgation (Num. v. 22³); as it is also the formula with which the people solemnly accepted the Priestly Law (Neh. viii. 6⁴ = 1 Esdras

¹ So in MSS. A and F of the LXX. B and Luc. have thirteen, having two curses in ver. 22 or ver. 23.

² The Vulgate text differs at this point, and has no “Amen.” Syr. and Aeth. follow LXX.

³ It is single in the Targums.

⁴ The “Amen” is single in LXX (B&A Luc.).

ix. 47¹), and, according to the romance, the words of Ozias (Judith xiii. 26 [20]²)³. This formula becomes "Amen *and* Amen"⁴ when following a doxology at the end of each of the first three divisions of the Psalter, although in the fourth division (Ps. cvi. 48⁵), and the equivalent 1 Chron. xvi. 36, there is for some reason only one "Amen," and so at the end of 3 and 4 Macc. We have thus what we may call a *Final Amen*, and the Vulgate provides us with two cases where a speaker says "Amen" to his own prayer, viz. 2 Esdras (i.e. Neh.) xiii. 31, and Tobit xiii. 18, while the same thing occurs in Pr. of Manasses, ver. 23⁶. A pure *Subscriptional Amen* appears in the Old Testament only at the end of Tobit⁷. It also is single. There remain to be considered only four passages where our authorities disagree as to what we should read, "Amen" or something else, and so we must examine the usage of the Versions.

(2) *Treatment of "Amen" in the Versions.* The practice of the LXX confirms the view just propounded as to the history of the word "Amen," while it illustrates the necessity of considering the various parts of the LXX apart. In the Pentateuch the LXX regularly translates מֵן into Greek⁸, and the same practice is continued throughout the Prophets,

¹ So in B, Syr., and Aeth.; but Vulg., A, and Luc. have only one ἀμήν.

² Only one "Amen" in A.

³ Eccus. i. 29 ends in E. V. and some Greek MSS. with a doxology and double "Amen," but the best MSS. and edd. and Vulg. omit the whole clause. The Syriac text differs at this point.

⁴ The LXX [BNAQ] has no "and."

⁵ MSS. AR^oT of the LXX have two "Amens," but Ν follows the M. T. with one.

⁶ It is to be noted that we have only Latin authority for what has since become so common, an "Amen" said to one's own prayer (for Prayer of Manasses, ver. 23, might fairly be regarded as of subscriptional origin), and, as we shall see, the usage can hardly be said to be found in the New Testament.

⁷ So in BA; in Ν it may be almost said to be preceded by a doxology.

⁸ The LXX translates "Amen" by γένοιτο eight times, by ἀληθώς once (Jer. xxxv. 6 [BNAQ] = M. T. xxviii. 6). For the other Greek versions, see farther on.

Former and Latter, and even the Psalter. But when we come to the work of the Chronicler, we find מן simply transliterated $\acute{\alpha}\mu\acute{\eta}\nu$, even in 1 Chron. xvi. 36 (though = Ps. cvi. 48). This practice, once begun, is continued right through the Apocryphal books¹. Aquila admitted $\acute{\alpha}\mu\acute{\eta}\nu$ to 1 Kings i. 36, but uses $\pi\epsilon\pi\iota\sigma\tau\omega\theta\acute{\eta}\tau\omega$ in Jer. xxxv. [xxviii.] 6, and elsewhere (probably always) $\pi\epsilon\pi\iota\sigma\tau\omega\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omega\varsigma$. Theodotion uses $\acute{\alpha}\mu\acute{\eta}\nu$ in the one place (Deut. xxvii. 15) where we can trace him (see, however, below on Isa. xxv. 1), and Symmachus appears to have carried this practice through consistently (we can test it in six cases). The same is true of the Aramaic (Targum and Peshitta) and Latin Versions, except that naturally the Vulgate Psalter has *fiat* = $\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\iota\tau\omicron$. The English Version carried the general rule of the Vulgate right through the Psalter also, but for some unaccountable reason followed the LXX in Jer. xi. 5. The Revised Version has of course restored “Amen” there.

The phenomena of the Versions appear thus to confirm the impression given us by the M. T.: whether “Amen” was common or not, originally, as a conversational particle, it became more and more common as a liturgical formula, and the more it became stereotyped in this way the less did it suggest any definite idea to the mind that needed to be translated into other languages, and the more natural did it become to transliterate it as $\acute{\alpha}\mu\acute{\eta}\nu$, *amen*. Whether the tendency can be traced even farther than this already in the LXX is not so certain. The LXX has, no doubt, discovered three “amens” in the Old Testament not to be found in the M. T.; but then it renders them $\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\iota\tau\omicron$, not $\acute{\alpha}\mu\acute{\eta}\nu$, and they do not seem to be cases of ingenuity, such as we shall find later in Rabbinical literature, but rather of a faulty MS. or careless reading. Thus in Jer. xv. 11 מן has been read מן , while in Jer. iii. 19 “Amen” must have been known as a living word in the language rather than as merely a liturgical formula, when מן was read as מן ,

¹ Except Judith xiii. 20 ($\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\iota\tau\omicron$, $\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\iota\tau\omicron$), where, however, Aeth. and Pesh. have “Amen, Amen.”

i.e. אָמֵן יהוה כִּי, and translated Γένοιτο, Κύριε· δτι. Still it is, of course, quite as possible that it was some earlier Hebrew copyist that made this mistake. In Isa. xxv. 1, the LXX, followed by Theodotion, read γένοιτο, i.e. גִּנֵּן, where the M. T. has גִּנֵּן¹. There can be little doubt that the M. T. is right in these three passages. The case is somewhat different in Isa. lxv. 15. Here it is the Massorettes (followed by Symmachus and Vulgate, and supported by Aquila's πεπιστωμένως) that have found גִּנֵּן, where the LXX render ἀληθινόν and Targ. אֱמִתָּא אֱלֹהִים. Symmachus actually understands this גִּנֵּן in the liturgical sense, and, as we shall see, it was probably so interpreted in the Apostolic age. But as, on the one hand, the liturgical "Amen" is peculiar to men in *reply* to God, and on the other hand, Barth's theory that גִּנֵּן is an abstract noun has hardly been substantiated, it is most probable that "Amen" is not the original form of the word in this place. It is natural to think of אֱמִתָּא (cf. אֱמִתָּא, Deut. xxxii. 4)², especially as this is translated ἀληθινόν in Isa. xxv. 1. Still simpler would be the almost equivalent גִּנֵּן following it in the same verse—a suggestion, in favour of which might be urged the fact that the LXX itself has actually converted this latter גִּנֵּן into גִּנֵּן, which, as usual, it translates by γένοιτο.

3. *Result*.—Our examination of the use of the word "Amen" in the Old Testament has given us twelve certain cases in the Hebrew text, and six to ten in the Apocrypha, and seems to lead to the following conclusions as to Old Testament usage. (1) The original use of "Amen" was to introduce an answer to a previous speaker (1 Kings i. 36, Jer. xxviii. 6, xi. 5). (2) Then the words of the answer were suppressed, and "Amen" stood alone (Deut. xxvii. 15 ff., Neh. v. 13, 1 Chron. xvi. 36 = Ps. cvi. 48, Tobit viii. 8,

Aq. has πεπιστωμένως, i.e. probably "Amen," and Sym. πίστει, i.e. probably *not* "Amen."

² Cf. Ps. xxxi. 6 אֱמִתָּא אֱלֹהִים; 2 Chr. xv. 3 אֱמִתָּא אֱלֹהִים; Jer. x. 10 אֱמִתָּא אֱלֹהִים; in which last case, indeed, Theod. has Θεὸς ἀληθινός, as the LXX has here.

ix. 12 [Vulg.]), this liturgical “Amen” tending to become double (Num. v. 22, Neh. viii. 6 [M. T.] = 1 Esdras ix. 47 [B, Syr., Aeth.], Judith xiii. 26). (3) The next stage is where there is no indication of a change of speaker, so that “Amen” actually appears to be the *last* word of the sole speaker, instead of the first (or only) word of the response. This usage is exemplified in two ways: (a) in the formal subscriptions appended, in conformity with Eastern custom, to a completed MS. Such “Amens” standing absolutely after a doxology are found in the Old Testament (“Amen *and* Amen”) at the end of the first three (four) divisions of the Psalter (Pss. xli, lxxii, lxxxix), and then, at a very much later date, in 3 and 4 Maccabees; (b) in the “Amen” said by the speaker to his own prayer, found twice in the Vulgate (2 Esdras [i.e. Neh.] xiii. 31 and Tobit xiii. 18), and also in Prayer of Manasses, ver. 23. (4) Already in our oldest MS. of Tobit we have what is almost a fourth stage, a simple subscriptional “Amen,” without doxology. We have thus in the Old Testament four usages: (i) Introductory, (ii) Detached, (iii) Final, (iv) Subscriptional.

4. *New Testament*.—The growing liturgical use of “Amen” in the later books of the Old Testament, and the phenomena of the LXX, prepare us for what we find in the New Testament, the Textus Receptus of which contains the word in some 119 places, of which the Revised Version retains 100¹. Strange to say, each of the four usages we have just found in the Old Testament is represented in the New Testament also. Usage i. (*Introductory*), which we have seen reason to regard as the original, is represented naturally enough by the “Amens” in the non-Epistolary part of the Apocalypse (vii. 12², xix. 4, xxii. 20) prefixed to a doxology, and referring back to words of another

¹ “Amen” is retained in the Vulgate throughout; and in the English versions outside of the Gospels. In the Gospels, when it introduces a sentence, it is translated “Verily,” and at first, in the Old English versions, it seems to have been regularly rendered “soðlice.”

² Westcott and Hort have here also a final “Amen” in square brackets.

speaker. Usage ii. (*Detached*) is found in the remaining "Amen" of this part of the Apocalypse (v. 14), and is testified to by Paul in 1 Cor. xiv. 16. Corresponding to usage iii. (*Final*) we have the usage of the New Testament Epistles (including the first part of the Apocalypse). If we exclude Apoc. i. 7¹, where a liturgical "Amen" is added to *vai* at the end of a solemn statement, the thirty-four "Amens" of the Epistles [T. R.] fall into two groups, fifteen following doxologies, and nineteen following blessings. The fifteen doxology "Amens" are all well attested (except 2 Pet. iii. 18)², but of the nineteen benediction "Amens" only two (Rom. xv. 33, Gal. vi. 18) are retained by Westcott and Hort, although they admit two others (1 Thess. iii. 13, a prayer, and Heb. xiii. 25) to their margin, and the Revised Version even admits the last mentioned, and Apoc. xxii. 21 to its text, as also, though doubtfully, Philem. 25. Of usage iv. (*Subscriptional*) there is no instance in the best texts of the New Testament; but there is a marked tendency to it in later MSS.³

As the book of Acts does not contain "Amen," all that remains to be examined is the Gospels. It is remarkable that these documents, whose literary history forms so intricate a problem, contain far more "Amens" than all the rest of the books of the Old and New Testaments together; and yet their usage does not exactly correspond to any one of the four stages we have distinguished. These "Amens" are all of one kind—for the five final "Amens"⁴ are wanting in the best texts—and form a very peculiar class, unparalleled in Hebrew literature⁵. They are initial

¹ Apoc. i. 18, 1 John v. 21, 2 John 13, which somewhat resemble it, are excluded in R. V.

² Retained in R. V., but omitted by Westcott and Hort. The other fourteen are Rom. i. 25, ix. 5, xi. 36, xvi. 27, Gal. i. 5, Eph. iii. 21, Phil. iv. 20, 1 Tim. i. 17, vi. 16, 2 Tim. iv. 18, Heb. xiii. 21, 1 Pet. iv. 11, v. 11, Jude 25.

³ Aethiopic MSS. often have a triple "Amen," corresponding to the **NNN** of post-Biblical Hebrew.

⁴ Matt. vi. 13, and at the close of each Gospel.

⁵ Delitzsch in *Zeitsch. für Luth. Theol.*, 1856, p. 422, and Dalman, *Gram. des Jüd.-Pal. Aramäisch*, p. 193, note.

“Amens” like group i. (pre-exilic and Apocalypse), but seem to lack the indispensable backward reference. This is the more striking as they are all in sayings of Jesus, and very frequently occur in a sort of dialogue¹. An examination of these passages, however—and they number about fifty-two in the Synoptics and twenty-five in John—will generally show that there is some trace, after all, of a reference either to some preceding words, or to the sentiment underlying them².

In Luke “Amen” occurs only six times³, three of the cases being common to the Synoptics, and three in verses peculiar to Luke. In three other places Luke has ἀληθῶς where the parallel passages in the Synoptics have ἀμήν⁴, and once (Luke xi. 51) *ναί* corresponds to an ἀμήν in Matthew. In Luke iv. 25, a verse peculiar to Luke, ἐπ’ ἀληθείας *may* represent an original ἀμήν, but in view of the ἀμήν in the preceding verse this is perhaps hardly likely⁵. In five (six⁶) passages peculiar to Matthew and Luke, the latter simply omits ἀμήν. The avoidance not only of the form ἀμήν, but even sometimes of any equivalent particle, is therefore characteristic of the third Gospel.

Mark has four passages where ἀμήν is peculiar to him, although Matthew has a parallel passage; while Matthew has only two lacking in Mark. The frequency of ἀμήν in Matthew is due to nineteen passages not in Mark, viz.

¹ They are invariably followed by λέγω ὑμῖν, except where this naturally becomes λέγω σοι, viz. in the solemn sayings to Peter (John xiii. 38 = Mark xiv. 30, John xxi. 18), to the thief on the cross (Luke xxiii. 43), and to Nicodemus (John iii. 3, 5, 11); and this form is used rhetorically once in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. v. 26).

² e.g. Matt. vi. 2: “The hypocrites [pray] in the synagogues . . . that they may have glory of men. Amen, I say unto you, They have received their reward.”

³ For xiii. 35, where it is wanting in the parallel Matt. xxiii. 39, does not have it in the best texts.

⁴ Luke ix. 27, xii. 44 (where, however, D has ἀμήν), and xxi. 3.

⁵ ἐπ’ ἀληθείας in LXX oftenest represents עֲדָתָא: also עֲדָתָא and עֲדָתָא.

⁶ In Luke xv. 7 the οὕτως in a sense represents the ἀμήν of Matt.

nine¹ peculiar to Matthew and ten where the parallel in Luke either omits (*a*) simply the ἀμήν (five or six times²), or (*b*) the whole formula³, or else changes it into something else⁴. Of the Synoptics, therefore, it is Mark that seems never to avoid the word.

A well-known peculiarity of the fourth Gospel is that it invariably (twenty-five times) has ἀμὲν ἀμήν, as against the just as invariable single ἀμήν of the Synoptics (about fifty-two times); and this phenomenon occurs even in one and the same saying, e.g. John xiii. 38=Mark xiv. 30=Matt. xxvi. 34=Luke xxii. 34, where Luke, as already explained, omits the ἀμήν altogether⁵. Delitzsch⁶ explained this peculiarity of the fourth Gospel as being due to a corruption of the Aramaic vernacular *amen amēna* (= *amen amer-'na* = ἀμὲν λέγω), which sounded like ἀμὲν ἀμήν, but Dalman (*loc. cit.*) contests this explanation⁷.

Two New Testament passages alone remain, and in these ἀμήν is treated as a noun⁸. In Apoc. iii. 14, where it is masculine, it is immediately explained as a designation of Christ as "the faithful and true witness." The key to this usage is doubtless the traditional Massoretic pointing of Isa. lxv. 16, which as we have seen is at least as old as Symmachus, with possibly a reminiscence of the practice of Jesus and of 2 Cor. i. 20. This latter passage is less clear; but τὸ ἀμήν has probably about the same meaning as in 1 Cor. xiv. 16.

5. *Liturgical Use of Amen.*—We have already observed the increasingly liturgical character of the "Amens" in post-exilic literature. (1) Our positive knowledge of the

¹ A tenth (Matt. xviii. 19) has ἀμήν in square brackets in Westcott and Hort, but none in R. V.

² Matt. v. 26, viii. 10, x. 15, xi. 11, xiii. 17 (xviii. 13).

³ Ibid. v. 18, xvii. 20.

⁴ Ibid. xxiii. 36, xxiv. 47.

⁵ The other twenty-four passages are peculiar to John.

⁶ *loc. cit.*

⁷ Apparently on the ground that the alleged pronunciation is a characteristic of the Babylonian not the Palestinian Talmud. See, however, pp. 71 and 77 of the same work.

⁸ The third passage (1 Cor. xiv. 16) calls for no remark.

details of the temple ritual of this period is very limited indeed. From 1 Chron. xvi. 7-36 it would appear that in the time of the chronicler it was the custom that when the Levitical choir sang selections (one or more) from the Psalter, the people answered, saying “Amen,” and praised Yahwè¹. It is at least plausible to hold that the usage² was one which, being well known, did not need to be constantly indicated in the MSS. of the Psalter, and that so, from motives of economy of space, the doxology was omitted except at the end of the great divisions of the Psalter (so Grätz)³. If this be so, we should find a parallel case in the English Church Prayer-book, where the Amen-doxology used after every selection from the Psalter is not printed. On the other hand, the comment of Shelomo b. Melech on Ps. xli. 14 suggests an equally plausible explanation of the presence of these doxologies: דברי המשרר נותן הודאה לאל בכלותו הספר במנהג הסופרים; and, when Grätz urges in support of the other view that in 1 Chron. xvi the Amen-doxology is added to selections from Pss. cv and xcvi which want it, he seems to fail to take account of Ps. cvi. 47 which is also included.

(2) Even for the Herodian temple ritual our witnesses are not contemporary, and such as they are they are not only meagre, but so unsystematic and fragmentary, not to say conflicting, that it is precarious to try to construct a systematic account, especially as the practice may have varied. We can hardly do more here than mention some of the points.

The chief occasions when one would look for Amen-responses in the ordinary temple ritual are these: (a) When the priests came out on to the steps and pronounced the

¹ It is likely enough that some such practice was in existence even if with Reuss, and after him Stade (and Cornill?), we regard this passage as a later insertion into the work of the Chronicler, which originally passed directly from ver. 7 to ver. 37.

² Cf. Ps. lxxviii. 35 [36] and 1 Chron. xxix. 20.

³ *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums*, 1872, p. 486.

blessing on the people (Tamid. vii. 2), and the latter, at a signal, prostrated themselves and worshipped. In this ritual, however, the blessing was not, as in the synagogues, pronounced in three parts with an "Amen" after each, but in one (ibid.); and a longer response was used (see further below). (b) When, after attending to the other offerings, the priest stooped to pour out the drink-offering, and at a signal the Levitic choir chanted the selection from the Psalter; for, at the trumpet blast that marked every pause, the people bowed and worshipped (Tamid. vii. 3). But we are not *told* of any "Amen" at this point. (c) In response to the concluding doxology with which the Levites may have ended their chant. If we assume that doxologies were really said after each Psalm, then it is at least possible to assume also that the forms used in the Herodian temple have been preserved for us in Taan. 16 b, where we are told that to each of the special doxologies on fast days for rain, which ended with the words, "Blessed be Yahwè, the God of Israel, from age to age" (ברוך ה' אלהי ישראל מן העולם), the people replied, "Blessed be the name of the glory of his kingdom for ever and ever" (ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד). But the argument that a rarer ceremony (prayer for rain) borrowed its ritual from some more common one, needs to be used with caution; and more precarious still is the assumption (Grätz) that the more common one was precisely the daily Psalm ritual. Still this is as likely as not to have been so, and with this proviso we may accept the hypothesis¹.

All this, however, gives us no certain "Amen." And there is a well known and often repeated statement in the Talmud, that "Amen" was in fact not said in the temple, but only in the synagogues (בבבולין). In the temple the form used was the response quoted above (ברוך שם וגו'). The explana-

¹ See some interesting discussions and conjectures in Ludwig Blau's article, "Origine et Histoire de la Lecture du Schema" (*Revue des Études Juives*, XXXI, 179-201), including the subject of the practice in the Synagogue of Jericho.

tion follows (Taan. Bab. 16 b): ומניין שאין עונין אמן במקדש: 'שנאמר קומו ברכו את ה' אלהיכם מן העולם עד העולם ויברכו שם כבודך.¹ Judah Calats (יהודה כלץ), however, is probably nearer the truth when he points us (*Sefer ha Musar*, Pereq 4, ed. Mantua, p. 42) to those passages in the Talmud that tell us that in the temple the divine name in the priestly benediction was uttered as spelled (בכתבו), instead of, as usual, בכניו, i.e. by the substitution of a less awful name, and that accordingly the “Amen” said in the synagogues after each of the three parts of the benediction was omitted in the temple. It would appear, therefore, that when the Tetragrammaton was pronounced, the longer blessing ברוך שם וגו' was used. The meaning of this obviously is, as Grätz clearly saw, not that people were not allowed to say “Amen” in the temple, but that there the special solemnity of the service demanded, and the postponement of the response to the end of the whole act allowed, the use of a more extended and impressive formula than a single “Amen;” just as in the English Church “Amen” alone is sung after hymns or short prayers, but after each Psalm a complete doxology.

If now we venture to apply these results to the Psalm ritual, we find that the Amen-doxology has disappeared. What then of the five doxologies in Pss. xli, lxxii, lxxxix, cvi, and 1 Chron. xvi? Can it be that they are really not temple doxologies at all, but synagogue doxologies? This was Grätz's view; and he accordingly maintained that they made their way into the Psalter only after the destruction of the temple. Their presence in the LXX, however, and especially in the translated form γένοιτο (see above), seems against this view. Grätz himself could not see how the Amen-doxology could have made its way into 1 Chron. xvi so late as this. Can we indeed be sure that “Amen” was not really said after all, only appended at the end of the longer formula, as it is in the English ritual just referred to?

(3) In the synagogue the response to the Shema seems

¹ i.e. Neh. ix. 5.

to have been the long one (ברוך שם וגו': Grätz, *loc. cit.*, p. 493), although usage varied; but the response to the priestly blessing, which was closely associated with the prayer, was "Amen," and the leader (העובר לפני התיבה) was directed not to join in the "Amen" lest his mind should be disturbed (מפני המרוף, Ber. V, 4)¹.

(4) Outside the synagogue, too, "Amen" was used in response to the father's blessing before and after food, though (notwithstanding Tobit viii. 8) not in private prayer (Lightf., *Hor. Heb.*, 302), and it frequently occurs, as already remarked, at the end of MSS. and treatises², as also on epitaphs (e.g. נשמתה תהי צרורה בן עדן אב"א סלה). Other formulae in use are: אמן כן יהיה רצון, i.e. אב"ר, as an introductory formula like the Mohammedan, *bi'smi 'llāhi 'rraḥmāni 'rraḥim*; שיחיה לימים טובים, i.e. שלי"טא, or יראה זרע יאריך ימים אמן, i.e. יו"א, after a man's name; and תהי נפשו בן עדן אמן, i.e. תנ"בעא, after the mention of one who is deceased, like the Arabic, *sallā 'allāhu 'alaihi wa sallam*.

6. *Jewish doctrine of "Amen."*—The theoretical prescriptions concerning the use of "Amen" were many. The following specimens will be sufficient to illustrate the style. The bread must not be broken at meals till "Amen" was quite finished (אין הבודע רשאי לבצוע עד שיכלה אמן), *Ber.*, f. 47 a), except in the case of one or two delaying inordinately (אבל אם כלה מפי רוב העונין אפילו אם עדיין) מיעוט שמאריכין בו אין צריך להמתין להם כיון שמאריכין בו יותר מדאי, Judah Calats, *loc. cit.*, f. 42 a, ll. 14–16). "Amen" could be freely said to a benediction uttered by a Jew; but in the case of a Gentile (Samaritan) great caution must be used (עונין אמן אחר ישראל המברך ואין עונין אמן אחר הכותי המברך) עונין אמן אחר ישראל המברך ואין עונין אמן אחר הכותי המברך, *Ber.* VIII, 8)³. A man must not pro-

¹ For the practice at a later date, see Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah Hilchoth Tephillah*, § 9.

² e.g. אמן נצח סלה ועד, i.e. א"נ ס"ו. ברוך יהוה לעולם אמן ואמן, i.e. בי"לאו.

³ Contrast Bartholomaeus Gavantus, *Thesaurus Sacrorum Rituum* (Rome, 1736), tom. I, pars iv, tit. ix, p. 1085, "Ad monitionem pro Judaeis, non respondetur, Amen."

nounce “Amen” hurriedly, or incompletely, or inattentively (lit. orphan¹), or disconnectedly (אין עונין לא אמן הטופה ולא אמן) (Ber., f. 47 a). “Hurriedly” was explained by some to mean “cutting short the first vowel,” by others, “before the last word of the benediction was completely uttered” (פיר' באלו הא"לף נקוד' בחטף ויש מפרשי') (*Orach Chajim*, f. 84 b, l. 20 f.), or cutting the word into two parts (ibid.). “Inattentively” was applied to “Amen” uttered by one who had not heard the words of the blessing (אמן יתומה דהיינו שהוא חייב בברכה אחת ושליח צבור מברך אותה וזה אינו שומעה ואע"פ שידוע איוו ברכה מברך השליח צבור מאחר שלא שמעה לא יענה אחריו אמן דהיא אמן יתומה, *Orach Chajim*, cap. 74, § 8, quoted in Vitranga, *De Synagoga*, p. 1100); or, according to another tradition, to “Amen” said at an interval after the blessing (אמן יתומה שלאחר זמן מרובה שסיים הברכה ענה אמן על דעת) (*Orach Chajim*, 85 b, l. 24 f.). “Disconnectedly” is explained as hurriedly and without attention (Judah Calats [יהודה כלץ], *op. cit.*, f. 42 a, l. 11). Moreover, Ben Azzai urges home the lesson by the assurance that as one deals with his “Amens” so shall he himself or his children be dealt with (בן עזאי אומר כל העונה אמן יתומה יהיו בניו יתומים) (Ber. 47 a), holding out the inducement that whosoever prolongs his “Amens” in so doing prolongs his days also (וכל המאריך באמן מאריך בן לו) (ibid.). The exact degree of prolongation of “Amen” must have been difficult to hit, however, for it must not be prolonged too much (כל העונה אמן יותר מדיא אינו) (Ber. 47 a), lest it drown the voice of the reader (לפי שאין קריאת החיבה נשמעת כשמאריך יותר מדיא) (*Orach Chajim*, f. 85 b, l. 35). Nor must it be said too loud (העונה אמן לא) (*Orach Chajim*, cap. 78, § 8, quoted in

¹ So a Psalm is called “orphan” when nothing is said of author or occasion of composition (בסמורא יתומה), Ab. Zar., 24 b, line 7 from foot).

Vitr., *loc. cit.*). The right speed is defined by the time it would take to say "God, faithful king" (ארוכה קצת כדי); while in the large synagogues the right moment was indicated by waving a scarf. Thus we read of the synagogue in Alexandria: ובימה של עץ באמצעיתה וחזן הכנסת עומד עליה והסודרין בידו וכיון שהגיע לענות אמן הלה מניף בסודר וכל העם עונין אמן (Succah, 51 b).

An almost superstitious reverence for the word appears again in the following doctrines. He that saith "Amen" is greater than he that uttereth the benediction (גדול העונה) (יהודה קאלטס, *Judah Calats, loc. cit.*, l. 19), because it is the former that secures the answer (כי הוא פותח המקור מראשיתו) להשמיע הברכה אל מקום המדה הצריכה למתפלל וכוונת המברך נאצלת ממקו' ברכת העונה אמן כי העונה אמן אינו קונע מחשבתו לפני המלך פנים בפנים (*ibid.*). Rabbi Jonah tells of the special merit of saying "Amen" to each benediction (העונה אמן אחר כל ברכה) (*Orach Chajim*, f. 84 b, foot). Rabbi Judah says, "Whosoever saith 'Amen' in this age is worthy to say it in the next age also; and so King David saith, 'Blessed is Yahwè, the God of Israel, from this age and to that age, Amen and Amen,' i.e. once 'Amen' in this age and again 'Amen' in the coming age" (Tanchuma, cited in Buxtorf, *De Synag. judaica*, in Ugolini, *Thesaurus*, IV, col. 1376). And so we read, "Whosoever saith 'Amen religiose et cum summa attentione,' speedeth on our deliverance" (*ibid.*). Rabbi Shim'on, we are told, said, "Whoever shall say 'Amen' with all his strength (i.e. with firm purpose), to him the gates of Paradise shall be opened (אמר רבי שמעון כל העונה אמן בכל כחו [פירוש בכל כונתו] פותחין לו) (שערי גן עדן), for it is said, 'Open the gates that the righteous nation which keepeth truth may enter in'¹" (*Orach Chajim*, 85 b, ll. 8 ff.), the exegesis of which verse is thus given: "Say not *shomer emūnim*, 'which keepeth truth,' but *she omer Amen*², 'which saith Amen'" (אל תקרי שומר אמונים) (Sanhed. 110 b-111 a).

¹ Isa. xxvi. 2.

² The saying is often quoted with *Amenim* (pl.) for *Amen*.

Nor is this semi-magic power of “Amen” confined to this life. In *Seder R. Amram* (ed. Warsaw, f. 13 b, foot) we read of the righteous answering “Amen” to David’s song of praise to God, whereupon “the sinners of Israel answer ‘Amen’ from Gehenna.” When God graciously inquires about them he is told “though they are in great straits, they force themselves, and say before thee, ‘Amen.’” God saith to the angels, “Open for them the gates of the garden of Eden, that they may enter and praise before me,” for it is said, Open ye, &c. (Isa. xxvi. 2)¹. A similar story, going into much more detail, may be seen in J. P. Stehelin, *Rabbinic Literature*, II, 68 f.

On the other hand, we find elsewhere importance attached to the mental attitude of the worshipper in the following explanation of אֲמוּנִים נֹצֵר יי (Ps. xxxi. 24 [23]), where the merit lies in faith undaunted by perplexities and delays: אלו שאומרי אמן באמונה אומר ש'צ ברוך מחיה המתים והם עונים אמן ועדיין לא ראו תחיית המתים ומאמינין בהק'בה שמחיה המתים אומר ש'צ ברוך נאל ישראל והם עונים אמן ועדיין לא נגאלו ואם תאמר נגאלו הרי חזרו ונשתעבדו ומאמינין שעתיד הקדוש ברוך הוא לנגאלם אומר ש'צ ברוך בונה ירושלם ועדיין היא בחורבנה ומאמינין בהק'בה שעתיד לבנותה ו'Orach Chajim', 85 a.) ועונים אמן הוי אמוני נוצר ה'.

Again, Rabbi Jose tells us that “Amen” has three powers: it is an adjuration (Num. v. 22)², an acceptance of a form of words (Deut. xxvii. 26), or an acquiescence in another’s saying (Jer. xxviii. 6) אמר רבי יוסי ברבי חנינא אמר רבי יוסי שבועה דכתיב ואמרה האשה אמן אמן • בו קבלת דברי דכתי' ארור אש' לא יקים את דברי התורה הזאת לעשות אותם ואמר כל

ואומר דור שירה לפני הקב"ה • ועונים אחריו הצדיקים אמן יהא שמייה רבא מברך לעלם¹ ולעלמי עלמיא יתברך מתוך גן עדן • ופושעי ישראל עונים אמן מתוך גיהנם • (fol. 14) מיד אומר הקב"ה למלאכים מי הם אלו שעונים אמן מתוך גיהנם • אומר לפניו רבונו של עולם הללו פושעי ישראל שאעפ"י שהם בצרה גדולה מתחזקים ואומרים לפניך אמן • מיד אומר הקב"ה למלאכים פתחו להן שערי גן עדן ויבואו ויומרו לפני שנאמר פתחו שערים ויבא גוי צדיק שומר אמונים • אל תקרא שומר אמונים אלא שאומר אמינים.

² Surenhusius, (Surenhusius, כל העוכה אמן אחר שבויה כמוציא שבויה בפיו : *Mishna*, III, 211 b). On Rabbinic explanations of the double “Amen” in Num. v. 22, see *Sota*, II, 5 (e. g. על השבויה • אמן על האלה • אמן).

העם אמן • בו האמנת דברים דכתיב ויאמר ירמיהו אל חנניהו אמן כי דברך (Shebu. 36 a). יעשה ה' יקם ה' את דברך.

Finally, to the question, "What is the secret of 'Amen'?" Rabbi Hanina answers, "God, faithful king" (מאי אמן אמר) (Sanh. 111 a). רבי חנינא אל מלך נאמן.

These illustrations must suffice as an indication of the nature of the Rabbinical treatment of the subject. Further details may be found e.g. in *Orach Chajim*, ff. 84 b-85 b, *Sefer ha Musar*, 42 a, b, and in the *Sefer Chassidim*, § 18¹.

7. *Christian Practice*.—If "Amen" was in common use outside of the temple, and especially in the synagogues, it would naturally be retained by the early Christians. At all events, 1 Cor. xiv. 16 shows that it was in liturgical use in the days of the Apostles as a well-known formal response of the whole congregation. The absence of the Amen-doxology from the Paternoster in the oldest text does not necessarily mean that some such doxology was not in very early use. The doxology occurs in a slightly different form in the *Didachè*, both in the Paternoster (ch. viii), and in two other prayers (chs. ix and x). As Dr. C. Taylor has pointed out, the form of the doxology seems to be modified by the context, and the absence of the "Amen" may indicate simply that it was felt, as an invariable response, not to belong to any particular form of prayer (cf. Grätz's theory of the doxologies in the Psalter). In one place in the *Didachè* "Amen" does occur (ch. x), immediately preceded by *Maranatha*. This naturally calls to mind the "Amen: come Lord" of Rev. xxii. 20, and it is even possible to suppose some connexion between this formula and the Jewish hymn

¹ וחיוב לענות אמן על כל ברכה וברכה שנאמר פתחו שיערים ויבא גוי צדיק שומר אמונים ¹ שאומרים אמן וגדול העונה אמן יותר מן המברך שהוא מודה לברכות המברך והמברך אינו מוכיר אלא שם אחד והעונה אמן מוכיר ב' שמות כי אמן עולה בגימ' בשם יו"ד ה"י ושם אל"ף רל"ה וצריך שיכוון אדם לבו לשמים בשעה עניות אמן שהוא אל מלך נאמן (*Sefer Chassidim*, § 18). This idea may be the origin of the custom in some Jewish rites for the Reader himself to say "Amen" before the congregation makes the response. Cf. p. 16 above and p. 22 below.

אין כאלהינו “There is none like our God,” occurring in all the Jewish liturgies¹, the first letters of the lines of which read **אמן בא**. The combination, which has been defended by Dr. C. Taylor (*The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, pp. 77–79), is very attractive; but, not to speak of the uncertain age of the hymn, there are two difficulties in the way of our accepting it with any confidence. In the first place, although it can hardly be doubted that the present acrostic arrangement of the lines is intentional, for the hymn would gain much in force by an alteration of the lines say to 2 1 5 3 4, it is not at all clear that the hymn was *originally* meant to be acrostic. As a matter of fact, indeed, other orders are found. Thus in *Seder R. Amram* (ed. Warsaw, 1865), f. 14 a, ll. 6 ff., we find the order 2 1 4 3 5, and in MS. Add. 434, of the Cambridge University Library, p. 107 b, the order 2 1 3 4 5 (cf. also Jellinek, *Beth ha Midrash*, II, p. 47, ll. 16–18, at the end of **מסכת היכלות**). The question is whether the acrostic form or the logical order is to be regarded as the more original. But in the second place, even if we could be sure that the acrostic order were the original, the reading of the acrostic title **אמן בא** as two words “Amen: Come!” is, of course, a mere conjecture: it might just as well be read “Amen; blessed art thou!” (**ברוך אתה**), and Mr. Schechter (*JEWISH QUARTERLY REVIEW*, 1892, p. 253, note) may be right in preferring the latter rendering².

¹ e.g. *Authorized Daily Prayerbook of the British Empire*, ed. S. Singer (1891), p. 167. The hymn runs as follows:—

- 1 אין כאלהינו • אין כארוננו • אין כמלכנו • אין כמושיענו
- 2 מי כאלהינו • מי כארוננו • מי כמלכנו • מי כמושיענו
- 3 נורה לאלהינו • נורה לארוננו • נורה למלכנו • נורה למושיענו
- 4 ברוך אלהינו • ברוך ארוננו • ברוך מלכנו • ברוך מושיענו
- 5 אתה הוא אלהינו • אתה הוא ארוננו • אתה הוא מלכנו • אתה הוא מושיענו.

² The hymn is actually referred to twice under the title **אמן בא** in a MS. Machzor (German ritual) of Dr. Taylor's (cf. **שבילי הקדש**, Venice, 1546, fol. 2 a, col. 2). On the second occurrence it is unpointed, but on the first it is pointed *amen ba*, which, while it naturally decides nothing as to the view even of the writer of the MS., at least does not favour that of Dr. Taylor. See further, Mr. Schechter's article cited above.

The use of "Amen" after prayers and the Eucharist in the second century is described by Justin Martyr in oft-quoted words¹; while Jerome's description of the heartiness of the response is almost too well known to bear repetition². The communicant said "Amen" on receiving the elements, and Ambrose explains "non otiose [quum accipis] dicis tu *Amen!*" (*De Sacramentis*, lib. IV, cap. 5)³. This practice is supposed to have fallen into disuse about the sixth century in the western churches (Riddle, *Manual of Christian Antiquities*, 1843, p. 379), though it continued to be observed "in the eastern churches, and in the Ambrosian (Milanese) and Mozarabic (Spanish) liturgies" (ibid.). The Scottish Liturgy (1637), however, preserved the form. In the Communion ritual we read, "*Here the person receiving shall say 'Amen,'*" and the form was recommended by Bishop Andrewes, Cosin, &c., while the practice is said to be still common among devout persons in the English church (Blunt, *Theol. Dict.*, p. 17)⁴. It also became somewhat common, though at a later date, to insert "Amen" after the name of each of the persons of the Trinity in the formula of Baptism; the people replying at the end "Amen"—a usage still to be found in Russia (Coleman, *Christian Antiquities*, p. 218). Moreover, a responsive "Amen" was sometimes said by the congregation after the reading of the Lesson (Bartholomaeus Gavantus, *Thesaurus Sacrorum Rituum*, Rome, 1736, tom. I, pars i, p. 208 [Tit. x. 6 f.]).

Christians followed in the footsteps of the Jews in

¹ Apolog., I, §§ 65, 67: Οὗ συντελέσαντος τὰς εὐχὰς καὶ τὴν εὐχαριστίαν, πᾶς ὁ παρὼν λαὸς περὶφημεῖ λέγων· Ἀμήν.

² "Ubi sic ad similitudinem coelestis tonitruī *amen* reboat, et vacua idolorum quatiuntur?" (*Comm. in epist. ad Gal.*, proem. ad lib. II, p. 428.)

³ Cf. August., *Contra Faustum*, lib. XII, c. 10: "Habet enim magnam vocem Christi sanguis in terra, cum eo accepto ab omnibus gentibus respondetur *Amen.*"

⁴ For a discussion how ecclesiastical practice required "Amen" to be said (by the priest or by the people) after the Consecration of the Elements, see Benedict XIV, *De Sacrosancto Missae Sacrificio*, Lib. II, c. 23, nos. 9-11.

enumerating the blemishes that would render the Amen-response ineffective. It might be “Amen pupillum,” i.e. יְחֻמָּה “cum quis precatione tenetur nec intelligit quod respondet;” or “Amen surreptitium,” i.e. חֲטוּפָה “cum surripit et dicit Amen, antequam absolvatur precatio;” or “Amen sectile,” i.e. קְטוּפָה “cum secatur in duas partes, nempe oscitanter audiens, et alias res agens” (Angelus Caninius, *Disquisitiones in locos aliquot Novi Test. obscuriores* [Francofurti, 1602], p. 55).

The English Church, moreover, in addition to distinguishing between “Amen” as a response after prayer with the meaning “So be it!”, and “Amen” as said after a Creed with the meaning “So it is!”, recognizes certain distinctions in the relation of the “Amen” to the form that precedes it. (1) In some cases the “Amen” is a response of the congregation, ratifying and accepting what the minister has said (e.g. Absolutions, Benedictions, Consecration of Elements, Commination). (2) In others it is (perhaps somewhat artificially) regarded as a part of the formulary, and is said by all who have recited the formulary, i.e. minister as well as people (e.g. Lord’s Prayer, Doxologies, Creeds, Prayer at end of Commination). (3) In certain cases it is the speaker alone that says “Amen,” solemnly ratifying what he has said (e.g. formula of Baptism, reception of the baptized into fellowship of the Church, Confirmation, Marriage, Ordination, the Paternoster at the beginning of the Communion service, and one place in the Commination service). These distinctions are indicated in the Prayerbook by “Amen” being printed in italics in (1), but in Roman type in (2) and (3)¹. Different from any of these cases, and quite peculiar, is the formula of the oath of supremacy administered to bishops, “In the name of God, Amen. I . . . do profess, &c.” Somewhat similar is the formula pronounced by the preacher in some churches.

¹ Cf. *The Annotated Book of Common Prayer*, ed. by J. H. Blunt, 1884, *passim*.

The churches that employ a liturgy have thus to a considerable extent preserved the ancient and natural responsive use of "Amen." In the other religious bodies the practice varies. Where great individual freedom prevails, "Amens" are freely uttered by members of the congregation in response to any saying that impresses them deeply. Where there is less flexibility, as e.g. amongst Presbyterians, the third of our four classes of "Amen" has become the rule, and, except where sung, the "Amen" is uttered by the officiating minister alone¹.

8. *The modern Synagogue*.—In the synagogue also "Amen" is used in two ways; sometimes with the formula "and let us say Amen" (וְנֹאמַר אָמֵן)²; sometimes with the formula "and say ye Amen"³. Just before the recital of the Shema, the worshipper is directed, when prayers are not said with the congregation, to add, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ נֶאֱמָר, "God, faithful king."

9. *Mohammedan usage*.—Mohammedan worship is much more of a private exercise, though usually performed in public. Still, "Amen" has been naturalized, and it is commonly said at the end of the first Sura of the Koran when uttered in prayer, its assonance with the irregular lines of the Arabic favouring the practice. Mohammedan scholars wander about in their attempt to explain the word. One says it means "Answer thou me;" another, "It is strangely asserted by some of the learned that after the *Fatiḥa* it is a prayer which implies all that is prayed for in detail in the *Fatiḥa*." Some solemnly assure us it is one of the names of God; while another declares that some say incorrectly that it means "O God," the word "answer!" being understood.

10. *Secondary Applications*.—German kings and emperors early began to append "Amen" to the introductory and concluding formulæ of state documents, and this

¹ On this anomaly, see *Catholic Presbyterian Mag.*, IX, 108 ff.

² *Authorized Daily Prayer-book of the British Empire* (1891), p. 69.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

practice appears to have been quite general till the time of Charles V. From that time, however, it began to be given up (Höck in Ersch und Gruber, *Allgemeine Encyclopädie*, III, 346, who refers to Ch. G. Hoffmann, *De usu particulæ Amen in diplomatibus regum et impp. Germaniæ*, Tübing., 1773).

In Syriac literature, “Amen” came to be used as a common noun meaning consent or approval, in such phrases as, “With the ‘Amen’ of the whole of Christendom,” and in modern English the same usage exists¹. By a rather strange fate, however, this word, which, as we have seen, originally invariably stood at the head of a sentence, is now also frequently used in the sense of the very last of any matter in hand.

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¹ For examples, see *A New English Dictionary* (Oxford), *sub voc.*